Table of Contents

		Page
List of Tables		2
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Methodology	4
	A. The Survey Instrument	4
	B. The Sample	4
	C. Response Rate	4
	D. Analysis of Data	4
	E. Limitations of the Study	5
	F. Operational Definitions	5
III	Student Characteristics	6
IV.	Preparation for Testing	10
V.	Student Expectations	12
VI.	Fulfillment of Student Expectations	14
VII.	Discussion/Implications	17
VIII.	Summary of Findings	19
	Appendix A	20

List of Tables

Table Number	Title	Page
1	Overall Response Rate	4
2	Male and Female Rates of Unemployment	6
3	Profile of Characteristics of Respondents	7
4	Sex of Students by Age	7
5	Level of Education by Age	8
6	Main Occupations by Sex	9
7	Preparation for GED Testing by Various Age Groups	10
8	Main Reason for Writing by Sex	12
9	Expectations for Improving Job Opportunities by Sex	13
10	Employment Changes for Students Writing Primarily to Improve Job Opportunities	14
11	Acceptance Rate - Main Reason for Writing Educational	14
12	Perception of GED Credential as a Milestone, by Education	15
13	Change in Confidence by Sex and by Earlier Education	16
14	Change in Self Image by Previous Education	16

I. INTRODUCTION

Introduced in Manitoba in 1972, the General Educational Development (GED) Test program provides a means of measuring the major concepts and skills associated with a high school education. The GED Test certificate is an official document and is widely accepted by employers and educational institutions as the equivalent of a grade XII diploma.

The GED Test credential is intended as an alternate means of assessing the abilities generally associated with a grade XII diploma for those candidates who have acquired their knowledge through informal study and adult experience. GED testing consists of a battery of five examinations: Writing Skills, Social Studies, Reading Skills, Science, and Mathematics.

In 1982, the Manitoba Department of Education undertook a follow-up study of successful GED Test candidates. The validity of the high school equivalency credential is dependent upon its usefulness as an alternative to a grade XII diploma.

In order to determine the usefulness of the GED Test program, the primary objectives of this study were to assess:

1) student characteristics,
2) the use of GED Test study aids and information sources in preparing for testing.
3) student goals and expectations, and
4) the degree to which the credential helps fulfill student expectations.

Compilation of the necessary data also provided information regarding student impressions and perceptions of the program.

II. METHODOLOGY

A The Survey Instrument

A brief, two-page questionnaire was developed by the GED Test Service, Correspondence School of the Manitoba Department of Education for use in the study. The questionnaire included items pertaining to each of the study objectives and was used to obtain all of the necessary data.

B The Sample

The target population for the study consisted of all 1981 GED Test candidates who had succeeded in achieving a Manitoba High School Equivalency standing. A total of 1427 questionnaires were mailed out.

C Response Rate

The actual sample used in the study consisted of 835 successful GED Test candidates. Table 1 summarizes the response rate obtained in the survey.

Table 1

Overall Response Rate

Questionnaires Mailed	Return to Sender	Returns Used	Response Rate
1427	113	823	59 %

Because of the time lapse between writing the exams and administration of the survey, it was not possible to make contact with all of the intended respondents. A large number of questionnaires were returned by the post office as bearing incorrect addresses, thus limiting the response rate.

D Analysis of Data

Frequency counts and percentages were calculated for each item on the questionnaire. Several cross tabulations of responses were used to provide additional information.

E Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in order to discern the characteristics and expectations of successful GED Test candidates. Also, an attempt was made to analyze the benefits derived from obtaining a Manitoba High School Equivalency credential. Because the survey sample included only successful examinees, results may not be generalized to the entire population tested. The findings of this report apply only to those candidates who achieved a grade XII standing.

F Operational Definitions

This report refers to the students who had more than a grade IX standing prior to writing the GED examinations as having "partial high school credit" or "some high school".

III. STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

One of the main objectives of this study was to determine the characteristics of successful GED Test candidates. Student's sex, age, education, and the nature of their employment are discussed here.

The survey sample was almost equally divided; 52% of the respondents were female and 48% were male (question 1)*. It was noted that, of the candidates surveyed, 53% were 30 years of age or less; 24% were "21 - 25" years of age, and 20% were in the "26 - 30" year age group (question 2).

Approximately 70% of the students indicated they had attained partial high school credit; 33% reported a grade X level of education and 32% reported having completed grade X1 (question 4).

The survey revealed that 78% of the total sample were currently employed (question 15A). The number of unemployed females was greater than the number of unemployed males; specifically, 32% of the females and 14% of the males were unemployed (Table 2)

Table 2

Male and Female Rates of Unemployment

	Male	Female
% Employed	86	68
% Unemployed	14	32
Number of Respondents	415	388

* Questions to which this report refers may be found in Appendix A.

Table 3 profiles student characteristics.

Table 3

Profile of Characteristics of Respondents

	Sex	Age	Previous Grade	Employed	Test Centre
Most Frequent Response	Female (52%)	21-25 (24%)	X (33%)	Yes (78%)	Red River (32%)
2nd. Most Frequent Response	Male (48%)	26-30 (20%)	XI (32%)	No (22%)	Miles Macdonnell (12%)
Number of Respondents	803	807	799	820	795

Although the survey sample was almost equally divided on the basis of sex, differences in sex distribution according to age group arose. It was noted that females made up the majority of respondents in only two categories, namely, the "26 - 30" and "41 - 45" age groups (Table 4).

Table 4

Sex of Students By Age

Age Group	% Male	% Female	Number of Respondents
20 or less	51	49	75
21-25	57	43	189
26-30	44	56	160
31-35	51	49	134
36-40	54	46	96
41-45	42	58	69
46-50	56	44	41
51-55	67	33	30
56 and over	71	29	7
Total Respondents			801

Levels of education were also found to differ with the respondents' age group (Table 4). Younger respondents were more likely to have attained partial high school credit than the older respondents; levels of previous education decreased with age. Of the "20 and under" age category, 70% had at least a grade X standing but only 29% of the respondents older than 56 years of age had attained the same level (Table 5).

Table 5

Level of Education By Age

Age	Education		Number of Respondents
	% Grade 9 or less	% Some High School	
20 or less	21	79	73
21-25	26	74	189
26-30	27	73	158
31-35	30	70	132
36-40	32	68	95
41-45	35	65	68
46-50	51	49	41
51-55	55	45	31
56 & over	71	29	7
Total Respondents			794

In addition, variations in type of employment for male and female respondents were also noted. Forty-two percent of the female examinees reported their current or most recent job as clerical, while only 3% of the males did so (Table 6). Males most often were in the construction, transportation, production, service, and managerial classifications.

Table 6

Main Occupations By Sex

Occupation	Male	Female
Clerical	3.3%	42.7%
Sales	5.6	8.7
Service	17.1	10.4
Farming, Fishing and other primary industry	5.9	0.3
Production	9.4	3.7
Construction	11.5	0.0
Transportation/ Equipment Operating	10.7	1.1
Teaching/ Instruction	5.4	3.7
Scientific/Technological	2.0	3.7
Social Sciences/ Artistic	1.5	1.4
Managerial	8.9	2.2
Other	18.6	22.2
Total %[1]	99.9	101.1
Number of Respondents	392.0	356.0

1 Total does not equal 100% due to rounding error.

IV. PREPARATION FOR TESTING

The survey also provided information regarding student awareness of and preparation for the testing program. This information was considered useful in assessing the effectiveness of GED Test program advertising methods and the popularity of available GED Test study aids.

The GED Test program uses various means of advertising including newspapers, brochures, Canada Manpower, etc. When the candidates were questioned as to how they first became aware of the GED Test program, "friend" was the most common answer, accounting for 48% of the responses. Respondents reported "newspaper" and "employer" 15% and 9% of the time, respectively. The least frequently cited source was "radio", accounting for only 1% of the responses (question 5).

Approximately 70% of the candidates surveyed indicated that they had either received a GED Test brochure or talked with someone regarding the GED Test prior to writing the examinations.

GED Test preparatory books/manuals were used by 51% of the respondents. GED Test preparatory courses and practice tests were taken by 10% and 7%, respectively. The remaining 31% of the respondents did not prepare for testing (question 7).

Preparation for testing varied little by age group despite the differences in previous education noted in Table 4. However, a relatively larger proportion of the respondents over 50 years of age used the GED practice test (Table 7).

Table 7

Preparation For GED Testing
By Various Age Groups

Method of Preparation	Age				
	20 or less	21-30	31-40	41-50	50 & over
Studied GED book/manual	45%	53%	51%	50%	45%
None	39	29	35	27	26
GED Preparatory Course	12	10	9	13	11
GED practice test	4	7	4	8	18
Individual Tutor	0	1	1	1	0
Number in Survey	75	350	230	111	38

Red River Community College, Winnipeg, Manitoba was the test site most frequently used; 32% of the sample wrote at this location (question 3). Miles Macdonnell Collegiate was the second most frequently reported test centre, accounting for 12% of the respondents.

V. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

"To improve job opportunities" was cited by 45% of the respondents as the primary reason for writing the tests. Thirty-one percent stated "personal satisfaction" and 24% reported "to broaden educational opportunities" as the main reason for taking the GED Tests (question 6).

While employment reasons were most frequently cited by both males and females, females were more likely to state "personal satisfaction" or "educational opportunities" than were their male counterparts (Table 8).

Table 8

Main Reason For Writing
By
Sex

	% Male	% Female
Improve Job Opportunities	51	40
Personal Satisifaction	27	34
Improve Educational Opportunities	22	26
Number of Respondents	411	384

In relation to job opportunities, 29% of all respondents expected the GED Test credential to assist in obtaining employment (question 10). Twenty-two percent felt that the GED Test certificate would help in obtaining a specific job; 17% expected the credential to increase the likelihood of job promotion.

Expectations for improved job opportunities varied by sex. Female respondents were more likely than were male respondents to state "help obtain employment" or "help keep present job" as expected benefits of the credential (Table 9). Male students were more likely to expect obtaining a specific job or promotion.

Table 9

Expectations For Improving
Job Opportunities
By Sex

GED Credential Expected To:	Male	Female
Help in obtaining employment	21%	35%
Help in obtaining a specific job	28	15
Improve promotion opportunities	21	13
Help keep present job	2	23
Other	28	34
Number in Survey	410	385

In keeping with the above stated expectations, 42% of the respondents had, at the time of the survey, applied for new employment (question 11A). Seventeen percent had applied for promotion (question 11B). Furthermore, 29% intended to apply for new employment and an additional 25% were considering the possibility (question 12). Sixty-six percent indicated that they did not intend to apply for a promotion (question 13). However, 67% of the respondents stated that they would indicate having received the GED Test certificate to their employers (question 14).

In relation to educational opportunities, 58% of the candidates anticipated that the GED Test credential would increase their chances of securing acceptance to post-secondary institutions (question 16). At the time of the survey, 22% had applied to educational institutions (question 17). Thirty-three percent of the respondents indicated that success in the program provided the incentive to continue their education (question 18).

VI. FULFILLMENT OF STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

The usefulness of the GED credential is, in part, reflected by occupational, educational, and personal changes resulting from success in the program. This section provides an analysis of such changes, especially in relation to student expectations and reasons for writing the tests.

Of the overall study sample, 58% had not applied for new employment since writing the GED Tests (question 11A). Eighty-three percent had not applied for promotion (question 11B). However, when only those students who indicated their primary reason for writing the test as job related were considered, it was found that 60% of these candidates had applied for new employment (Table 10). Thirty-nine percent of those writing primarily to improve job opportunities stated that the GED credentials had assisted them in obtaining a promotion or new employment.

Table 10

Employment Changes for Students Writing Primarily to Improve Job Opportunities

	Application Made for New Employment	GED Credential Assisted in Obtaining New Employment/Promotion
Percentage	60	39
Frequency	184	139
Number of Respondents	308	360

Of the respondents indicating a desire to broaden educational opportunities, 48% had been partially or totally accepted into educational institutions (Table 11).

Table 11

Acceptance Rate - Main Reason for Writing Educational

	Application Made	Total or partial Acceptance Gained
Percentage	45	48
Frequency	86	80
Number of Respondents	191	167

In addition to educational and occupational considerations, personal satisifaction was often cited as the main reason for writing the tests. Several items on the questionnaire were used to assess the fulfillment of this expectation.

Sixty-six percent of the total sample described receiving the Manitoba High School Equivalency credential as a milestone in life (question 22). For students who previously held less than a grade X level of education, achievement of the credential was particularly satisfying; 75% of these candidates considered receiving the certificate a milestone in life (Table 12).

Table 12

Perception of GED Credential
As A Milestone, By Education

Perception of GED Certificate as a Milestone	Previous Education	
	Grade IX or Less	Grade X or Higher
% Yes	75	62
% No	14	21
% Undecided	11	17
Number of Respondents	241	544

Overall, 66% of the candidates reported an increase in confidence in their abilities since receiving the GED certificate (question 20). These effects were especially evident among the female students, 74% of whom underwent positive changes in self-confidence. Among candidates having no high school background, 72% reported increased confidence (Table 13).

Table 13

Change in Confidence
By Sex and By Prior Education

Change in Self Confidence	Sex		Prior Education	
	Male	Female	No High School	Partial High School
% Increase	59	74	72	63
% No Change	41	26	28	37
% Decrease	0	<1	0	<1
Number of Respondents	408	383	545	242

Of the total sample, 43% felt greater status and prestige with friends and 38% reported that their status and prestige with co-workers had increased (question 21). As with levels of self confidence, these positive personal effects were particularly evident among those candidates who had previously held less than a grade X standing (Table 14).

Table 14

Change in Self Image
By Previous Education

Result	Grade IX or Less	Grade X or Higher
Increased Confidence	72%	63%
Increased Statue-friends	50%	40%
Increased Status-Co Workers	47%	33%

Overall, the vast majority of successful GED Test candidates reported favorable impressions of the program. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents rated the GED Test program as good or very good (question 23).

VII. DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

The survey results indicated that successful GED candidates were typically between the ages of 21 - 30, employed, and held a grade X or XI standing prior to writing the tests. However, students' age ranged from "less than 20" to "over 56" and their previous education level varied from grades VI to XII, implying that the program was also able to serve a more general population. The sample was almost equally divided on the basis of sex.

Student characteristics were found to differ slightly by age and sex. Lower levels of previous education associated with increased age were most likely due to the generally lower educational attainment levels of years past. Female respondents reported being unemployed more frequently than did males, possibly indicating that homemakers were also making use of the testing service. Clerical occupations were predominant among the women surveyed; male respondents came from more diverse occupational backgrounds.

Most respondents indicated having first heard of the GED Test from a friend. Initial awareness of the program was less often attributed to formal means of advertising. The opinions of the program reported on the questionnaire suggest that the importance of the "grapevine" in alerting potential candidates reflects the favorable reactions of former students, rather than deficiencies in the more formal means of advertising.

The majority of the respondents used GED Test preparatory books or manuals as study aids. More intensive study methods, including preparatory courses and individual tutors, were less frequently used. These findings suggest that successful candidates possessed the skill and motivation necessary for independent study. It is also likely that successful examinees had acquired much of their knowledge through adult experience; this probability is substantiated by the fact that many respondents did not prepare in any way for testing.

Although the desire to improve employment opportunities was quoted by less than half the students as the primary reason for writing the tests, it was, nonetheless, the most frequently reported single reason. While expectations that the credential would assist in obtaining specific jobs or promotions were common among male respondents, female concerns more often centred on obtaining employment or keeping a present job. Considered in conjunction with the higher unemployment rates of female respondents, this result suggests that the women surveyed were less job-oriented than the men. This is further substantiated by the fact that females were relatively more likely to state "personal satisfaction" or "to improve educational opportunities."

Overall, most of the successful candidates had not applied for new jobs or promotions but indicated that they would inform their employers of their success in the program.

The GED credential was also found to benefit educational opportunities. Although the majority of students had not applied for further schooling, approximately one-third of the study population reported that the credential provided the incentive to apply to post-secondary institutions. Although total acceptance often depends on specific course prerequisites, the GED credential was found to be of use in satisfying entrance requirements for approximatley one-quarter of the students.

Although the majority of students had not applied for new jobs or further education, most found that the credential had increased their self-confidence. Approximately one-half of those students who previously held less than a grade X education felt increased status and prestige with friends and co-workers, as well. Positive changes in self-confidence were also pronounced among these students. Similarly, females, who reported a high incidence of unemployment, indicated an especially high frequency of increased confidence. These candidates found success in the program to be particularly satisfying.

The findings of this report indicate that, for some students, success in the GED Test program can assist in obtaining new employment and/or acceptance to post-secondary educational institutions. However, the overwhelming benefit of the program appears to be of a personal nature. That the majority of students were satisfied with the GED Test Program is reflected in the very favorable impressions they reported. The majority of candidates consider achieving the credential as a milestone in life and rate the GED Test program as good or very good.

VIII. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following is a brief summary of the results of this survey.

This survey revealed that many of the successful GED Test candidates:

- were 21 to 30 years of age.
- had a grade X or grade XI standing prior to writing the examinations.
- were employed.
- who were unemployed were female.
- who were employed females held clerical positions.
- who were male had more diverse occupational backgrounds.
- were the best means of advertising the program.
- had used the GED Test preparatory books or manuals as study aids in preference to more intensive study involving preparatory courses and individual tutors.
- acquired much of their knowledge through adult experience.
- who were male showed greater job orientation.
- who were male, indicated that improving their educational standing was job related; while females reported that their improved educational standing was related to their "personal satisfaction" or improved educational opprtunities".
- planned to inform their employees of their success in the program.
- had not applied for new jobs as a result of improved educational standing.
- particularly unemployed females, reported an increase in self-confidence.
- reported that success in the GED Test Program assisted them in obtaining new employment.
- rate the program as being highly positive.

APPENDIX A
FOLLOW-UP SURVEY
OF
MANITOBA HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY
CERFIFICATE HOLDERS

1. Sex:

	%
Female	52
Male	48
Number of Respondents	803

2. Age:

	%
20 or less	9
21-25	24
26-30	20
31-35	16
36-40	12
41-45	9
46-50	5
51-55	4
56 & over	1
Number of Respondents	807

3.	Test Centre Number:		%
	1	Red River Community College	32.2
	3	Assiniboine Community College	10.9
	4	Swan Valley	1.0
	5	Dauphin	2.4
	6	Gimli	0.6
	7	R.D. Parker Collegiate	3.3
	8	Gillam School	1.0
	9	Leaf Rapids	0.3
	10	West Lynn Heights	0.3
	12	Hapnot Collegiate	1.5
	13	Special Sitting (Winnipeg)	1.0
	14	Garden Valley	1.7
	17	Headingley	0.4
	20	Joseph H. Kerr	0.4
	22	Glenlawn Collegiate	7.9
	23	Miles Macdonnnel Collegiate	12.4
	26	Lac du Bonnet	1.5
	27	Portage Collegiate	3.4
	29	Ashern Central	0.4
	30	Margaret Barbour	0.3
	31	Rossville School	0.1
	32	Steinbach	2.8
	33	Minnedosa	1.2
	34	Duke of Marlborough	0.3
	37	Goose Lake	0.8
	38	Tuxedo-Shaftesbury	7.4
	39	Rorketon School	0.1
	40	Gineau School	0.1
	41	Lord Selkirk	1.1
	42	Killarney	0.3
	43	Melita	0.4
	44	Virden	0.9
	45	Beausejour	1.0
	46	Riverton	0.5
	47	Brandon Univesity	0.1
	Number of Respondents		795

4. Highest grade completed prior to the GED Tests:

Grade	%
VI	0.1
VII	2.0
VIII	9.3
IX	19.2
X	33.3
XI	32.0
XII	4.1
Number of Respondents	797

5. How did you become aware of the GED Tests?

	%
Friend	48
Instructor	2
Newspaper	15
Radio	1
Calender or brochure	4
Employer	9
Community College	4
Canada Manpower	4
Newsletter/poster	5
Other	8
Number of Respondents	799

6. The main reason for writing the GED Tests:

	%
Improve job opportunities	45
Improve educational opportunities	24
Personal Satisfaction	31
Number of Respondents	802

7. Preparation for the GED Tests:

	%
Individual tutor	1
Took GED Practice Test	7
Studied book/manual	51
Took GED preparatory course	10
Did not prepare	31
Number of Respondents	806

8. Prior to writing the GED Tests:

	%
I received a GED Brochure	34
I talked with someone regarding the GED tests	33
I talked with someone regarding job/ educational opportunities	13
I talked with someone regarding other ways to finish school	10
Other	10
Number of Respondents	807

9. The GED Test credential has assisted me with obtaining:

	%
New full time employment	7
Different Employment	7
Promotion in existing job	9
Not applicable	77
Number of Respondents	803

10. Prior to writing the GED Tests, I expected that the credential would:

	%
Improve my chances for promotion	17
Improve my chances of getting a job	29
Help me obtain a specific job	22
Help me keep my present job	2
Other	
30	
Number of Respondents	803

11. A. Since writing the GED Tests, I have applied for a new job:

	%
Yes	42
No	58
Number of Respondents	724

B. Since writing the GED Tests, I have applied for a job promotion:

	%
Yes	17
No	83
Number of Respondents	567

12. I intend to apply for a different job because I received a GED certificate:

	%
Yes	29
No	46
Undecided	25
Number of Respondents	785

13. I intend to apply for a job promotion because I received a GED certificate:

	%
Yes	16
No	66
Undecided	18
Number of Respondents	779

14. I will indicate to my employer that I have received a GED certificate:

	%
Yes	67
No	24
Undecided	9
Number of Respondents	787

15. Please describe below the primary job you currently hold:

	%
A. Currently unemployed	22
Currently employed	78
Number of Respondents	820

B. Job most recently held

	Currently Employed %	Currently Unemployed %
Clerical and related occupations	20	28
Sales Occupations	7	7
Service Occupations	16	9
Farming, fishing, forestry, logging mining, and quarrying	3	2
Production process and related	6	8
Construction trades	6	5
Transportation and other equipment operating and material handling	7	4
Teaching and related occupations	5	2
Scientific and technical occupations	3	4
Social sciences and artistic occupations	1	3
Managerial and administrative occupations	7	2
Other occupations	19	26
Number of Respondents	587	167

16. When I wrote the GED Tests, I expected that the GED Certificate would improve my chances to enter another educational institution:

	%
Yes	58
No	30
Undecided	12
Number of Respondents	797

17. Since writing the GED Tests, I have applied for entry into an educational institution:

	%
Yes	22
No	78
Number of Respondents	798

18. The GED certificate provided me with the incentive to apply to the educational institution:

	%
Yes	33
No	67
Number of Respondents	775

19. Upon making application to an educational institution with my GED certificate, I have been accepted for study:

	%
Yes	15
No	76
Partially	9
Number of Respondents	684

20. Since receiving the GED certificate, my confidence in my ability has:

	%
Increased	66.1
Remained the same	33.8
Decreased	0.1
Number of Respondents	797

21. A. The GED certificate has give me greater status and prestige with my friends:

	%
Yes	43
No	57
Number of Respondents	752

B. The GED Certificate has given me greater status and prestige with my fellow workers:

	%
Yes	38
No	62
Number of Respondents	703

22. Passing the GED Tests and obtaining a "Manitoba High School Equivalency" certificate has been a milestone in my life:

	%
Yes	66
No	19
Undecided	15
Number of Respondents	796

23. The GED Test Program is:

	%
Very Good	60
Good	38
Bad	2
Number of Respondents	798